# Ethical Values for Future Leaders in Higher Learning Institutions in South Africa: A Cogent Scoping Review on Academic Jealousy

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## Abstract

This review examines the critical importance of ethical values for future leaders in South African higher learning institutions, focusing on academic jealousy. Higher Education (HE) institutions play a pivotal role in shaping society; therefore, future leaders need a strong ethical foundation to navigate academic complexities. Academic jealousy, characterized by undermining peers due to envy, threatens academic integrity and progress. The authors conducted a desktop and literature study using a scoping review approach, emphasizing cognitive distortion variables contributing to academic envy and key global ethical leadership principles. The literature revealed the roots, manifestations, and detrimental impacts of academic jealousy on individuals and institutions. The review underscores the necessity of fostering a culture of ethical conduct, transparency, and mutual respect among academics. It advocates for leadership development programs prioritizing ethical training to cultivate leaders who are academically competent and morally grounded. The review concludes with strategies for HE institutions to address academic jealousy, promoting an ethical and collaborative academic environment, ultimately advancing South Africa's educational landscape.

## Keywords

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# Valores Éticos para Futuros Líderes en Instituciones de Educación Superior en Sudáfrica: Una Revisión Exploratoria sobre la Envidia Académica

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## Resumen

Esta revisión examina la importancia crítica de los valores éticos para los futuros líderes en las instituciones de educación superior sudafricanas, centrándose en los celos académicos. Las instituciones de educación superior (ES) desempeñan un papel fundamental en la configuración de la sociedad; por lo tanto, los futuros líderes necesitan una base ética sólida para navegar por las complejidades académicas. Los celos académicos, caracterizados por socavar a los pares debido a la envidia, amenazan la integridad y el progreso académicos. Los autores llevaron a cabo un estudio de escritorio y de la literatura utilizando un enfoque de revisión de alcance, enfatizando las variables de distorsión cognitiva que contribuyen a la envidia académica y los principios clave de liderazgo ético global. La literatura reveló las raíces, manifestaciones e impactos perjudiciales de los celos académicos en individuos e instituciones. La revisión subraya la necesidad de fomentar una cultura de conducta ética, transparencia y respeto mutuo entre los académicos. Aboga por programas de desarrollo de liderazgo que prioricen la capacitación ética para cultivar líderes que sean académicamente competentes y moralmente fundamentados. La revisión concluye con estrategias para que las instituciones de ES aborden los celos académicos, promoviendo un entorno académico ético y colaborativo, en última instancia avanzando en el panorama educativo de Sudáfrica.

## Palabras clave

Académico, celos, ética, instituciones de educación superior, valores

Higher Education (HE) institutions are greatly influenced by the rapid exponential growth of technology, rising social mobility, and closeness, all of which have existed since the dawn of humankind's actions and emotions (Twum-Darko & Harker, 2015). Academic jealousy is undoubtedly one of the behaviours (Cleary et al., 2016; Koçak, 2019; Bayar & Koca, 2021) that supports the legitimacy of the equity of institutions of higher learning (Baya & Koca, 2021). In a high-performing organization, it is becoming standard procedure for staff members to change their positions to meet requirements and acquire credits and recognition for professional growth and appraisal.

The problem arises from the models used to award benefits and the system triggers people's emotional evaluations and results in complex emotional states that trigger jealousy (Cleary et al., 2016; Koçak, 2019; Bayar & Koca, 2021). Academic jealousy is defined as behaviour that is motivated by emotions and integrity because it stems from the belief that one's professional duties make one feel inadequate and inferior (Vecchio, 2000; Baya & Koca, 2021). Academic jealousy might also be increased by the fear of losing a position of authority if a subordinate is awarded as templated in a promotional system of the workplace (Baya & Koca, 2021). This jealousy is exaggerated by inner anxiety and fear of loss if a staff member promotes another employee because they see others as a direct or imaginary threat in the academic space (Vecchio, 2000; Baya & Koca, 2021). Academic jealousy is frequently encountered in institutions of higher learning which are mandated by national governments to be champions of research, innovation, teaching, and learning (Özdemir & Erdem, 2020).

The impact of this jealousy which can be regarded as one of the questionable leadership ethics could be devastating. In the South African tertiary institution space, institutions are subject to ministerial appointee assessors and some are placed under administration due to human factors considered contributors to the deterioration of the image of the institutions (Mngomezulu, 2012; Boughey & McKenna, 2021). Academicians are equally to blame as this jealousy which spreads to an abundance of elements such as rivals, ambitions, career, promotions, and authority impacts the overall university project in terms of global rating, government subsidies, assessment quality and integrity, accountability, teaching, and learning (Küçük, 2019; Küçük & Taştan, 2020). Küçük (2019) and Küçük & Taştan (2020) elucidate how envy has a disastrous influence on productivity, which is assessed in universities by graduation rates, research outputs, and innovation, all of which are translated into an institution's grade. Furthermore, the apparent rise in academicians' jealousy has recently created fear of others succeeding and a mistrust of new behaviours that the institutions are positively encouraging (Üçok, 2019).

The future of universities will be doomed if, during the 21$^{st}$ century, positive academicians with increased performance and efficiency are not protected from the negative emotions brought by the culture of fear and by low standards of ethical leadership that hamper their progress due to jealousy and inappropriate use of authority positions (Baya & Koca, 2021). Positive jealousy at universities increases production where there is an unbiased application of promotion guidelines for growth. Özdemir (2018) clearly showed that a person either tends to eliminate the comparison by working harder, which increases production or if this conflicts with the questionable ethical leader, such a person resorts to ways of using his authority by blocking an individual's work, digging a well or slander. To address these notions, this review

draws from the cognitive distortions and leadership styles in the VUCA world, people dynamics in the complex organisational behaviours, HE office and corridor politics (Mahel, 2021; Grappi, 2018; Ferris, 2011), followership traits and attributes, and neuroscience of leadership (Rock & Schwartz, 2006), and assists in identifying certain key ethical values for future leaders.

Institutions of higher learning in South Africa are embedded in the unchallenged elements of dominance, control, and power (Hlatshwayo & Alexander, 2021). Even after the 1994 democratic dispensation, little has done to address the troubled racial dominance and control in HE (Gumede, 2020). The neocolonialism nature of academia perpetuates itself in the new cohort of African academics entering HE. This kind of dominance and control breeds many situations and behaviours that make HE unbearable for some staff and students (Barnes, 2018). These situations lead to several negative reflections on the experiences of students and staff of HE (Cornell et al., 2017). This leads to the loss of staff members who add value to the institution and trample on the talent of students with the potential to make significant contributions to society (Boonzaier & Mkhize, 2018; Prevost & Hunt, 2018). There are anecdotal reports that in HE institutions, racial injustice incidents are generally concealed for the benefit of the aggressors. The institutions of higher learning need to monitor these events and put in place systems that deal decisively and honestly with these situations to prevent them from constantly repeating themselves. This short cogent review aims to define a few key ethical values for future higher learning institution leaders in South Africa and addresses some factors that lead to academic jealousy in higher learning institutions.

## Methodology

This cogent short review article was developed by examining studies on academic jealousy and the ethical values for future leaders in higher learning institutions globally, with a primary emphasis on challenges associated with leadership in the HE sectors globally and highlighting some of the key espoused ethical values for future leadership in higher learning institutions. As a result, the authors carried out a desktop and literature study as described by Holcombe (2023), where a scoping review approach (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020) was adopted with an emphasis on several cognitive distortion variables that contribute to academic envy in HE as well as a number of the most important ethical leadership principles that are evaluated globally. As described by Fusar-Poli et al. (2020), the databases used for this study were Google Scholar and ResearchGate, using the search words:

> Cognitive Distortion and Higher Education and South Africa or Cognitive Distortion and Universities and South Africa"; "Corridor Politics and Higher Education or Office Politics and Higher Education or Corridor Politics and Universities or Office Politics and Universities"; "Bullying and Academic Jealousy and Higher Education or Bullying and Academic Jealousy and Universities"; "Mobbing and Academic Jealousy and Higher Education or Mobbing and Academic Jealousy and Universities"; "Sabotage and Academic Jealousy and Higher Education or Sabotage and Academic Jealousy and Universities"; "Postgraduate Student Supervision Academic Jealousy and Higher Education or Postgraduate Student Supervision Academic Jealousy and Universities"; "Publish or Perish"; "H-Index and Research Promotion or H-Index and Academic Tenure"; "Followership Traits and Higher Education or Followership Attributes and Higher Education and

South Africa or Followership Traits and Universities and South Africa or Followership Attributes and  Universities and South Africa"; Inclusivity and Higher Education and South Africa or Inclusivity and Universities and South Africa"; "Africanising Leadership and Higher Education and South Africa or Africanising Leadership and Universities and South Africa".

The authors used a twenty-five-year exclusion criterion, where the research material constituted research articles, reviews, book chapters, learning material subscribed by Business School – Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership Development (university undisclosed), theses, short research communications, and short industrial communications. All materials included in this review were not selected on a strict quality assessment for inclusion or exclusion other than the twenty-five-year exclusion criterion. Therefore, there should be no presumption that the evidence examined was comprehensive (Fusar-Poli et al., 2020). All material reviewed was analyzed and discussed based on the primary objective, with the conclusion leading to the recommended future studies to lay a foundation for the ethical values for future leadership in higher learning institutions in South Africa, a new dawn.

## Review Findings

### Challenges Associated with Leadership in the Higher Education sector in South Africa

#### *Cognitive Distortion Factors Leading to Academic Jealousy in Higher Education*

Scholars in the HE sector are driven by various philosophies, leadership styles and followership attributes, primarily due to their professional expertise and academic autonomy as a global approach to drive academic projects (Gonçalves, 2024). However, the notion of cognitive distortions has brought not only academic jealousy, but also a change in the culture, values, and vision, subsequently affecting the strategic frameworks for universities in South Africa (Chukwuorji et al., 2021). The leadership system thinking in the business sector may be the reason why the bureaucratic system thinking that is ingrained in universities' academic frameworks for governance has not been successful. It is widely assumed, as described by Baporikar (2024) and Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2024), that professional expertise, particularly the immediate leadership styles and followership attributes in the governance in academic structures, has created challenges which directly and indirectly trigger cognitive distortions such as academic jealousy and bullying (Cleary et al., 2016; Koçak, 2019; Bayar & Koca, 2021), office and corridor politics (Grappi, 2018; Ferris, 2011), student bullying, mobbing, sabotage, the postgraduate student supervision debacle, and the "*publish-or-perish culture*" (Parchomovsky, 2000).

#### *Understanding Office and Corridor Politics in the Higher Education Sector*

Office politics as a standard adopted system, particularly in the bureaucratic corporate space has come to haunt and sabotage the unrestricted academic system globally (Grappi, 2018;

Ferris, 2011). In South Africa, this has worsened of late and is attributed to the sector politics. For example, the appointment of administrators by the Department of HE has shown that the free academic arena has been significantly compromised (Mngomezulu, 2012; Jameson, 2019; Boughey & McKenna, 2021), and this calls into question the knowledge of these affected higher learning institutions. In addition, the key stakeholders, students, have shown disgruntled behaviour through the #FeesMustFall (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2023), which opened a debatable engagement globally; thus, this shows how seriously the office and corridor politics (Grappi, 2018; Ferris, 2011) destroy the higher learning sector, degrading the quality of education in South Africa with time (Taraza et al., 2024). Moreover, the notion of ranking institutions has come to define the superiority complex in universities, thereby maintaining the arrogance of those deemed to produce mainstream knowledge (Kochetkov, 2024); which is a prejudicial notion, with tendencies of discrimination.

The higher learning sector has been compromised at the national level, including the offices of the top management and the council (Boughey & McKenna, 2021), as well as the administrative management, cascading down to academic portfolios at the faculties, schools and department level that has adopted bureaucratic administrative leadership (Hautala et al., 2024). The trend in South Africa shows that the unemployment rate is significantly high (Banerjee et al., 2008). This has not only led to gatekeeping through xenophobic tendencies in higher learning spaces for those who are in diaspora from their countries (Mudau & Khanare, 2021) but also created internal institutional tribal and racial squabbles within various disciplinary differences (Biglan, 1973). For example, it is said that without good governance, a tendency of biased racial, tribal and gender-exclusive access to academia has been seen as a trend in most institutions in South Africa. This has been seen through the way certain portfolios are strategically created, occupied by a preconceived political deployment as well as disciplinary programme access in certain faculties by certain race(s), gender, and tribes, depending on the province and mandate by the national agenda (Alexander, 2020).

These gatekeeping tendencies are attributed to the failed organisational culture (Gaus et al., 2019), which at most is distinct on paper, the Institutional Strategic Vision(s), and ineffective governance by rigid academic leaders. Cascading to the lower faculty level, and further, it has become a culture even at the lower level of academia, the corridor politics (Grappi, 2018; Ferris, 2011) adopted from the higher offices is haunting programmes, where wordings like "*in academia, you need to have a thick skin*" (Cassidy et al., 2018) has shown how to sabotage due to inhouse politics is negatively affecting the knowledge bearer and has explicitly shown how exposed and vulnerable this sector is due to jealousy (Cleary et al. 2016; Koçak 2019; Bayar & Koca 2021). Where is academia going with this mentality, lacking good leadership and followership, haunted by sabotage and jealousy?

### Bullying and Academic Jealousy in Complex Higher Education

The study of workplace bullying or mobbing goes back to 1982 when Heinz Leymann, a German industrial psychologist and medical doctor, began researching and publishing his findings on a phenomenon he named using the English word "*mobbing*" (Martins et al., 2023). Leymann (cited in Martins et al., 2023) discovered that people who had been bullied suffered a more intense and long-term level of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than others who

had experienced some traumatic event that had resulted in PTSD (Motin, 2009). The discussions about aggression, violence, mobbing, emotional abuse, bullying behaviours etc., amongst adults emerged from around the 1990s (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Academic sabotage and bullying involve the repeated conscious effort to wound and seriously harm another person not with violence but with words and actions that deliberately damage the image of the targeted person and prevent access to available opportunities. Bullying hurts the physical, emotional, and mental health of the person targeted. In 2003, the Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute (now known as The Workplace Bullying Institute) (WBI) performed a survey relating to health (U.S. WBI, 2010). The survey findings revealed that the overall ranking of the Prevalence of Symptoms is most to least frequent: 1. Anxiety, stress, excessive worry (76%); 2. Loss of concentration (71%); 3. Disrupted sleep (71%); 4. Feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled and constantly on guard (paranoia) (60%); 5. Stress headaches (55%); 6. Obsession over details at work (52%); 7. Recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks (49%); 8. Racing heart rate (48%); 9. Bullying entails repeated and regularly occurring events that offend, socially exclude someone, or negatively affect someone's work tasks (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Von Bergen et al. (2006) describe bullying as typically a combination of repeated, inappropriate, and unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, and low-level physical behaviours that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, harassing, humiliating, degrading, or offensive.

This phenomenon is characterised by bullies using tactics such as blaming for errors, unreasonable work demands, insults, putdowns, stealing credit, threatening job loss, and discounting accomplishments (Barbour, 2013). It can be a form of harassment where a co-worker or co-workers inflict a hostile work environment upon an employee who becomes the target of systematic harmful social acts. Bullying does exist in the workplace and is one of the significant sources of malicious and, most of all, health-endangering (i.e., mental, physical, and emotional) behaviours overlooked by the HE sectors. Bullying inflicted in the workplace, also named mobbing, involves different forms of abuse directed towards others by multiple co-workers (Prevost & Hunt, 2018). This includes cyberbullying, which Haughton et al. (2013) describe as the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. This deplorable behaviour has thrived on the deficiencies arising from poor legal framework and policies, and leadership styles of management that worship the strict superior-subordinate relationship (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Kakumba et al., 2014). Interestingly, university researchers have paid relatively little attention to bullying in their backyards (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Various studies around the U.K., the U.S., Pakistan, and Canada, have indicated that superiors in universities displayed aggression and bullying towards their juniors (Keashly & Neuman, 2008; McKay et al., 2008; Fox, 2009, Anjum et al., 2019). However, in America, workplace bullying has been viewed as a silent pandemic, a leading cause of suicide in universities, costing HE its employees' well-being and productivity. King and Piotrowski (2015) gave an account of the bullying incidents of educators by fellow educators. Workplace mobbing can be inflicted through verbal, emotional, or psychological abuse (Faria et al., 2012). In Australia, Sharma (2017) found that the power differentials between the victims and the alleged perpetrators stemmed from the hierarchical organisational structures in universities.

Kakumba et al. (2014) revealed that in Uganda, institutions of higher learning are certainly not immune to the prowl of bullying and mobbing, which are antecedents to poor employment relations. Barbour (2013) indicates that the most common type of sabotage and bullying behaviour faculty members engage in is discounting another person's accomplishments, followed by turning other people against their victim or subjecting their victim to public criticism or constant scrutiny. Keashly and Neuman (2010) found that the nature of the relationship between actors and targets defines bullying; it was not surprising to find that supervisors and administrators are often identified as actors. It leads to absenteeism, reduced staff productivity and motivation, and loss of experienced and skilled staff through resignation (Kakumba et al., 2014; King & Piotrowski, 2015). The study in Makerere University has reported undermining (23.3%), disrespectful behaviour (18.6%), forced work (14.0%), intimidation (11.6%), and sabotage (9.3%) as the leading causes of bullying with the majority (60.8%) of perpetrators being higher ranking staff. The majority of the staff (53.3%) who participated in this study were unaware of the bullying. In America, Dellifraine et al. (2014) reported that 71% of respondents reported at least one of the following four behaviours: gossip or malicious rumours, belittling remarks, ignoring or overlooking work contributions, and unwarranted and unprofessional remarks. In South Africa, Conco et al's. (2021) study revealed that 64% of the respondents experienced bullying in HE, with 61% being women and 65% academic staff members. These are similar findings to the global trend.

Early action is critical in preventing situations from escalating into increasingly hostile and damaging problems such as bullying and sabotage in the workplace (Keashly & Neuman, 2008). Prevost and Hunt (2018) echo that the risk factors are related to academic mobbing, including sex, sexual orientation, gender, race and ethnicity, rank or seniority, work experience, and age. Consequently, incidents of academic bullying often lead to multiple negative outcomes for victims, including physical, emotional and psychological damage. In America, for instance, African-American faculties are targets of academic mobbing, revealing multiple barriers they face regarding tenure and promotion (Prevost & Hunt, 2018). Lampman (2012) found that more women are bullied in HE than men, 63.3% of women versus 50.2% of men. Unfortunately, this type of mobbing and bullying is rarely reported (Lewis, 2004). The appropriate processes and procedures could help build the faculty's capacity (awareness and skills) and support their efforts to constructively manage and, in some cases, resolve their situations. Keashly and Neuman (2010) note that in contrast to reliable evidence of other forms of hostile and demeaning behaviours on campus such as student and faculty incivility in the classroom, the quality of interpersonal relations, such as collegiality, is essential in retaining faculty. The extensive literature on conflict and misconduct in HE highlights the structural and interpersonal opportunities for disagreement and potentially for hostility in such settings. Finally, the academic environment has several organisational and work features that increase the likelihood of hostile interpersonal interaction (Twale & De Luca, 2008).

### *Student Bullying, Mobbing, and Sabotage in Higher Education*

Bullying in HE institutions is the repeated mistreatment of a target by one or more bullies through acts of ridicule and public humiliation, amongst others (Motin, 2009; Dellifraine et al., 2014). These bullies can be academic staff (engaged in sabotage tendencies against a student)

or fellow students. Students in HE are characterised as any individual enrolled in the programme of study offered by the institution of higher learning. Bullying also includes intentional meddling with the academic and professional progress of the student in HE, such as sabotage (Johnson, 2020). Dames (2006) and Haughton et al. (2013) identify sabotage as a deliberate act of interfering with other students' success and progress in academic activities by academic staff or fellow students. Emerging evidence of academic mobbing found that the most common types of bullying were psychological and emotional attacks, often directed towards a student by either administrators, lecturers or even other students (Kumar et al., 2019; Johnson, 2020). Students who experience bullying and mobbing can lose dignity, self-confidence and productivity, and experience excessive non-school-work-related stress and other related health issues (Motin, 2009). Prevost and Hunt (2018) conclude that institutions of higher learning should help foster a culture and environment of civility and focus on reducing incidents of academic mobbing and sabotage. There is still a need to close the research gap on bullying, sabotage, and academic mobbing. The analysed studies did not examine all components of sabotage and mobbing in academia as related to students.

In the United States, workplace bullying or mobbing is extremely difficult to prosecute because earlier, bullying or mobbing did not fall under any federal or state laws (Motin, 2009). Calvert's (2017) study revealed that this is partly due to students becoming dissident due to low self-esteem, lack of encouragement, and a sense of purposelessness. Low self-esteem causes a student to feel worthless. Self-esteem issues may result from puberty, a lack of home encouragement or abuse at home, bullying, or an underlying mental illness. Although there is a growing body of research on workplace bullying and aggression across multiple industries and professional groups, less is known about the effects of bullying, sabotage, and mobbing of students in HE. Mental health problems were identified in the study by Lee (2020) as one of the outcomes of aggression, sabotage and bullying of students in institutions of higher learning. Hollis (2017) asserts that bullying is based on a power differential, that those without power are more likely to endure bullying. Students in HE are expected to obey and follow the instructions of the academics and support staff. In some cases, students are subjected to maltreatment in lecture rooms and university offices. The majority of these treatments are not reported and remain unchallenged, leaving the victims feeling hopeless and demoralised. Conco et al. (2021) affirm that at the individual level, bullying can lead to physical problems such as somatic or musculoskeletal disorders and mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and even suicidal ideation. There is mounting evidence that bullying also occurs in South African universities (ASA Wits, 2015).

### *Postgraduate Student Supervision Debacle in Higher Education*

The postgraduate research program enrolment in honours, master's, or doctoral studies is an important long-term commitment that has the potential to transform a student's life (Shariff et al., 2014). During the study period, a key person in a student's life is his or her research supervisor; therefore, an effective working relationship between the supervisor and the student is crucial (Ali et al., 2016). Over the years supervision has also proven to be problematic, counterproductive, harmful, and unethical at times (Ladany et al., 2013). Studies have explored

how supervisors interact with their students and the consequences associated with using various supervisor behaviours to make supervision effective (Alam et al., 2013). The idea is to identify the supervisor characteristics and behaviours that are associated with favourable outcomes (Costa, 2018). The outcomes include high motivation, high performance, favourable attitudes (toward the student's research work) and developing recommendations for improving student supervision (Abiddin et al., 2011). The supervision challenges have the potential to undermine the development of knowledge in any area of research (Cullen et al., 1994). Abusive supervision is defined as students' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact. Abusive supervisors may mistreat their subordinates to accomplish objectives, causing emotional and psychological injury (Costa, 2018). For instance, a supervisor may mistreat students to elicit high performance or to convey the message that mistakes will not be tolerated (Ali et al., 2016). Petty tyranny refers to a superior's use of power "*oppressively, capriciously, and perhaps vindictively*", as comprising six subdimensions: arbitrariness and self-aggrandizement, belittling students, lack of consideration, a forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging initiative, and noncontingent punishment (Shariff et al., 2014). Petty tyranny captures behaviours that may not necessarily be viewed as hostile. For example, a supervisor would not be perceived as hostile simply because he or she is not friendly or approachable or because he or she does not perform small actions to make life pleasant for the student.

In recent studies, researchers found supervisor guidance and support helpful; however, there were large individual differences concerning what students found unhelpful (Ladany et al., 2013). Students in HE generally struggle to complete their research endeavours in a specified time (Costa, 2018). Academic supervision can occur through textual and verbal conflictive supervisor behaviour or unsupportive supervisor behaviour (Ali et al., 2016). These characteristics can be shown in an old-fashioned (teacher-centred) supervision approach. Askew et al. (2016) note four factors that affect the behaviour of research supervisors, namely workload agreements, time pressures, quality of students, and recognition of the supervisors' contribution. The old-fashioned supervisor conducts supervision under the assumption that the emphasis is on power, control and dominance over the student. The student's role is to follow instructions and comply with everything put to him or her. However, according to the constructivism theory, the supervisor approach (student-centred) rests on the assumption that community is built through interactions and that shared normative frameworks embrace reflexivity. The concept of "*reflexive supervisor*" derives from the social constructivist theories with assumptions that we understand the world by changing it. The supervision process in the eyes of the reflexive supervisor becomes a co-learning exercise between the supervisor and the student. Although it is a skills transfer session, the supervisor is concerned about the feelings and well-being of the student. The human factor is inculcated in the activities of the reflexive supervisor, he or she approaches supervision of the student in a kind manner.

### *Publish or Perish: Notion of H-Index*

The notion of "*publish-or-perish*" (Parchomovsky, 2000) has come to affect scientific leadership in the HE sectors and has not only led to cognitive distortions among established scholars but also indirect academic jealousy between generations in the HE sectors (Vecchio,

2000; Bayar & Koca, 2021). Van Dalen and Henkens (2012) argue, using many citations, that the upward mobility of younger scholars has risen and subsequently increased the H-indexes. From the primitive systems thinking of older scholars, especially those who are regarded as giants in various hard and soft disciplines as described by Biglan (1973), it has been more of a frustration as the significant increase in the so-called increasing professoriate in South Africa has led to the compromise of academic quality enhancement. On the other hand, with the significant changes in HE, in response to the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Mahel, 2021), the argument remains on the agility, authenticity and assertiveness of new scholars of this generation who are moving towards higher adversity quotient personalities and leadership stances (Fitriani et al., 2023).

It is known that the HE system in South Africa was developed to favour the privileged and elites along racial lines (Larkin, 2021). The traditional HE institutions have not begun to reimagine black people as the effective producers of knowledge in those institutions (Hodge & Lacasse, 2011; Manganyi, 2016; Jacobs & Bank, 2019). Education and psychology scholars have demonstrated the perpetuation of ideas of coloniality in the HE systems of the country (Manganyi, 2016). The coloniality of the educational systems in HE rewards processes is demonstrated in the inequality of academic staff on demographics and journal accrediting systems as regulated by DHET (Belluigi & Thondhlana, 2019; Dupree & Boykin, 2021; Heleta & Mzileni, 2024). Hlatshwayo and Fomunyam (2019) found that young black academics in academic development programmes in traditional white universities were used as instruments of marginalisation and gatekeeping for the benefit of white academics which underscores the domination of white culture in the academic sphere in the HE system of South Africa. This illustrates the inequality among racial groups, demonstrated in the dominance and longevity of employability in HE institutions (Shultz & Rankhumise, 2023). Many studies show that there are barriers and hurdles that black academics are faced with in the HE institutions of South Africa. The concept of "*publish-or-perish*" has to be viewed as an ultimatum which in the current situation seems overstretched as a standard for survival in academia (Parchomovsky 2000). The planes are not balanced between racial lines in South Africa and this situation can never be acceptable. To delve further into the concept, many black scholars wish to resolve the conditions faced by black people in the communities that they emerge from. Meaningful research efforts that focus on local challenges of black communities result in the rejection of papers by black scholars because editors feel they are not in the interest of their readers. These are concerns that need to be debated within academic research discourse and make the "*publish-or-perish*" ultimatum a realistic concept within the neocolonial educational system.

**Ethical values for future higher learning institutions leadership in South Africa**

This section of the review highlights some of the factors identified through a desktop and literature review (Holcombe, 2023); the leadership styles, good followership traits, inclusivity as well as Africanising leadership in HE sectors in South Africa.

### Leadership Style Suitable for the VUCA World in the Higher Education Sector: Authors' Opinion

Marwala (2021) reported explicitly in his book on modern and contemporary leaders in the VUCA world (Mahel, 2021), that agility comes out as the key trait to survive the HE sectors, sector (as an office) and corridor politics (Ferris, 2011). In his writing, Marwala (2021) asserts that the sphere of agility is a thing of the future, where no leader should speak without highlighting the technology, the Internet of Things, or artificial intelligence, in the 21st century. This raises the question of how this is associated with leadership. Agile leaders in the VUCA world require scholars who are turning to academic leaders in the HE institutions, especially in hard, hard-applied, soft and soft-applied disciplines to acclimatize to the significantly complex and ever-changing VUCA world (Mahel, 2021).

Recently, the global recession in 2018/2019 pushed countries such as South Africa into junk status; subsequently impacting the value of education in South Africa (Jansen 2023a); when the HE institutions were hit by the riots across the country on the *#FeesMustFall* (Jansen, 2023b; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2023); when the globe was under the siege of the pandemic; and COVID 19, forcing HE institutions to close down, with some of the institutions still recovering to this day, especially those previously disadvantaged in South Africa (Alex, 2022), and interestingly, even those that were advantaged are being financially challenged because of stagnation. In response, Marwala (2021) highlighted in brief on types of leaders required in HE institutions, "*Those who are interested in science and technology should also be required to study human and social sciences, visa-versa*". In this quote, he portrays how a norm of scholars in HE institutions is required to consider a certificate to teach, a Postgraduate Diploma in HE, which gives an open context in HE. Yet, the so-deployed scholars in the sciences, technology, management and humanities have failed with no qualifications to embody their leadership in the VUCA world. This has not become a crisis in South Africa, but a matter of politicising academic leadership portfolios (Mahel, 2021).

Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016) reported that the servant leadership style of arrogant renowned academic professors and those holding doctorates leads to academic job satisfaction in the faculty compared to the controlling autocratic leadership style mostly taken by either early or older academic leaders. This is corroborated by the writings of Marwala (2021), who argues that the advancement of South African leaders should adapt to the Chinese strategy (Marwala, 2021; Marwala, 2023a; Marwala, 2023b), which is considered the global rating of the education system, comprising of modern and forward-looking ideology which is embraced by agility as a key quality in leader-person. We agree with the global servant yet authentic leadership style for leaders in HE institutions in South Africa, as politicism in leadership as described by Marwala (2021) and Jansen (2023a, b) bears no change against the changing HE sector, especially if it were to be globally rated and modernised. Lastly, we assert that stances required in future leaders should portray agility, especially in the ever-changing HE sphere; thus, culture-driven institutions, cascaded meaningfully to the faculties level should be a thing of the future (van Ameijde, 2009; Asmawi et al., 2013). This is further corroborated by Marwala (2023b), who asserts that leading in this space should encompass higher-order thinking, yet compassion and sympathetic selfless leading should play a key role in human capital development in academia. The notion is that solidarity in the space of academia is a

practice and mentality of the past. This has been numerously noted with the low-quality aspect of the "*publish-or-perish*" notion and the research incentives, where quality has been significantly downgraded through postdoctoral and visiting professoriate fellowships (Melin, 2005; Fitzenberger & Schulze, 2014).

### Followership Traits and Attributes in the Higher Education Sector

Pragmatic or alienated followership comes naturally as a stance for a majority of the academic staff members, and this at most is ascribed to the type of business at hand in academia (Kelley, 1992). From the beginning of time, academia was reserved for a group of those perceived as intelligent, while others were excluded because they were not part of the elite-intelligent class nor did they subscribe to certain norms. This is highlighted by Bernal and Villalpando (2002) who explain the apartheid of knowledge in academia. However, with time, particularly in this era of decolonisation and Africanization of different curricula from different disciplines, as described by Biglan (1973) in the African continent, particularly in the South African academic context, leadership stance and agility play a major role in describing how followers in academia become inclined to the cultural, tribal and African academia followership stances due to the current era and context (Billot et al., 2013; Osborne, 2011).

For example, the "*Ubuntu Principles*" of Nelson Mandela's servant and people-centred leadership turned followers in soft-applied disciplines such as Humanities faculties into exemplary followers, as they are qualitatively allowed to apply their day-to-day life principles in their thinking. On the other hand, this is not the case with most scientists and engineers; they are abstract and are at most ascribed to be alienated, while some are passive, conformist and suppressed to be promoted (Kelley, 1992). The biggest question remains, what types of leadership stances are to be maintained by those in critical powers in academia to embrace and change the followership stances in operation spaces? Is academia yet to take the corporate stance to improve its organisational performance in Africa?

Leaders of the future, as described by Marwala (2021), should portray skills that ease the subscription of followers in the diverse highly cultured academic fraternity. From the Vice-Chancellors to the executive directors in support structures in universities, organisational cultured systems thinking that attracts, retains and influences those contributing to the university goals should be displayed (Gaus et al., 2019). At most, the Institutional Strategic Vision shared by the university councils during the Annual Lekgotla contain this drafted document. However, the self-same executive management is failing to embrace the organisational culture strategies embedded in these documents, subsequently leading to a lack of good followership (Billiot et al., 2013; Gaus et al., 2019). To embrace good governance with good leadership, organisational culture remains the core base of entrusting all employees by getting a clear buy-in from all levels (Gaus et al., 2019). The bureaucratic structure is not conducive to embracing good leadership. For example, in most institutions (Boughey & McKenna, 2021) there is normally minimal or unclear humanistic communication on the culture at hand from top management; it normally cascades in a bureaucratic structure, and at most with a lack of good leadership in different structures. Only documents are shared with the assumption that academic staff will comprehend and accept them without any dispute.

However, this has been shown to significantly affect the followership at hand (Osborne, 2011; Billiot et al., 2013), and for the future improvement of followership, good leadership systems in HE sectors, particularly in universities, are sorely required. For future institutions, this can only be achieved by an annual meeting where the institutional visions embracing good governance are communicated first-hand by the bearer, the office of the Vice Chancellor, with all employees and delegations at the higher levels in attendance.

### *Embracing Inclusivity in the Complex Higher Education Sector*

Diversity, equity, and inclusivity in contemporary higher learning institutions are not new concepts and have been widely studied (Mudau & Khanare, 2021). However, xenophobia and prejudice attributed to racism and gender remain core challenges in higher learning (Mudau & Khanare, 2021; Heffernan, 2022). Contributing to these factors, the cognitive distortions, the office and corridor politics (Ferris, 2011; Grappi, 2018) in the higher learning sector, bullying, mobbing, sabotage and academic jealousy in higher learning, the postgraduate student supervision debacle and the most common "*Publish-or-perish: Notion of H-index*" are yet to be modified through effective and good leadership and followership that embraces inclusivity (Parchomovsky 2000; Bayar & Koca, 2021). For example, regarding the cognitive distortions, recent studies (Gonçalves, 2024) are recommending personal mastery through self-discovery, and these are to be effectively facilitated by Human Capital support; however, this remains part of the Institutional Strategies Visions, that are gathering dust year-in-year-out without meaningful implementations, including every level of the Human Capital. To achieve this theoretically, as described by Danko (2003), academics are human and require a nurturing approach from very agile leaders who understand talent management and are authentic in leading diverse Human Capital, most of whom have worked pragmatically on their tenures for a lifetime. On the other hand, office and corridor politics (Ferris, 2011; Grappi, 2018), as well as bullying, mobbing, sabotage and academic jealousy, require good cultured system thinking from top management, cascading gradually with the same principles to the lower management, with clearly regurgitated information to ease comprehension of the complex strategy at hand; thus, executive management remains the custodian and responsible office to lead by example in ensuring that the uptake of the strategy does not discriminate and is widely expressed across the diverse community meaningfully (Zerfass et al., 2020). Lastly, the postgraduate student supervision debacle and the most common "*Publish-or-perish: Notion of H-index*" should be decluttered using an effective organisational culture (Gaus et al., 2019) that embraces quality education and ethical research; thus, none of the students and academic staff should be excluded due to race, class or gender.

### *Africanising Leadership in the Higher Education Sector in South Africa*

The HE leadership model was adopted from the old colonial (apartheid) leadership model (Behm-Cross, 2017). The existing colonial leadership model in HE was developed to favour one (European) race in exclusion of the African people (Walker, 2018). Little or nothing has been done to transform the colonial leadership model that continues to be used in HE. The lack

of transformation in HE leadership calls for the conceptualisation of an alternative leadership model that addresses the concerns and aspirations of the African people. Africanised leadership efforts in the context of HE should not be limited to but must concern itself with the adoption of the type of leadership model that is not exclusive or oppressive to people of any other race. It has to be curious about the needs and aspirations of the indigenous people of Africa irrespective of gender, ethnicity or social orientation (Mamdani, 2018). It must assure the people of Africa that access to human rights, dignity and integrity, sustainable livelihoods, and physical and mental health and well-being are systemically ensured in HE, rather than focusing on institutional change or individual engagements among leadership and their subjects.

The concept of Africanisation signifies the process of taking a stand that is concerned with highlighting and assuming the cultural and historical perspectives, practices, and values that are African in design (Walker, 2018). Africanised leadership promotes African knowledge systems, cultural values, and practices in various aspects of leadership. It is the leadership that seeks to create an environment where Africans take pride in their cultural heritage and belief systems. This is achieved by infusing African philosophical values and cultural significance into the processes of leadership (Prinsloo, 2010; Walker, 2018). Africanised leadership encourages the command of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in dealing with the modern-day challenges faced by African people in various walks of life, it promotes the use of indigenous languages. Leadership within the context of the African philosophy is founded on the belief that leadership should be a collaborative, communal, and holistic process where the leaders along with African people should be fully engaged and productive members of the HE institution (Letsekha, 2013).

## Conclusion

The review reveals a concerning trend of academic jealousy within higher learning institutions in South Africa, which poses a significant threat to the ethical integrity and overall functioning of these institutions. The prevalence of academic jealousy, characterized by actions such as the sabotage of colleagues' work, spreading of false information, and hindrance of academic progress, undermines the collaborative spirit that is essential for academic growth and innovation. This issue is exacerbated by a lack of strong ethical leadership and inadequate mechanisms to address unethical behaviour effectively.

The impact of academic jealousy extends beyond individual victims; it creates a toxic environment that stifles creativity, discourages collaboration, and ultimately diminishes the quality of education and research output. The situation is dire and requires immediate and concerted efforts to instil and reinforce ethical values among current and future leaders in academia. Failure to address this issue urgently could result in long-term damage to the reputation and effectiveness of South Africa's HE sectors and institutions.

Based on this review, it is firstly recommended that *Ethical Leadership Training Programs* be implemented, similar to the current programmes run by HE Leadership and Management (HELM). However, shortcomings of the programme are that higher learning is bloated with old bureaucratic professors lacking agility and not participating in these programmes. Therefore, HE institutions should urgently develop and implement compulsory comprehensive

ethical leadership training programmes for current and future academic leaders. These programmes, like HELM, should focus on instilling values such as integrity, transparency, and respect, which are crucial for combating academic jealousy. These programs should follow the "*future professors*" type of initiatives and "*professors*" forums that exist within the institutions.

Secondly, the establishment of a *Code of Conduct with Strict Enforcement Mechanisms*: Institutions must establish or reinforce a clear code of conduct that explicitly addresses issues related to academic jealousy. This code should include specific consequences for unethical behaviour with transparent and swift enforcement to deter such actions. Monitoring of such a code of conduct can be assigned to the risk office and human resources and every line manager should be obligated to create a culture of positivity.

In addition, *Creation of Support Systems for Victims of Academic Jealousy*: Institutions should establish confidential support systems and reporting mechanisms for those affected by academic jealousy. These systems should ensure that victims are protected from further harm and that their complaints are addressed with the seriousness they deserve. Wellness and Careways should be assigned to manage this task, and whistleblowers or anonymous reporting should be encouraged with evidence to show serious alleviation of academic jealousy. Moreover, the promotion of a *Collaborative Academic Culture*: Academic leaders should promote a culture that values collaboration over competition. This can be achieved through initiatives such as team-based projects, interdisciplinary research opportunities, and recognition programs that reward collaborative efforts. This task should be carried out through an HR talent search in faculties so that the culture of the institution encourages all employees to become ambassadors.

Another practice should be the *Regular Monitoring and Evaluation of Ethical Practices*: There should be regular assessments of the ethical climate within institutions. These evaluations should involve surveys, feedback from staff and students, and external audits to ensure that ethical standards are being maintained and improved over time. This should be done by the Institutional Forum, Institutional Planning and Quality Enhancement, Council of Higher Education, Human Resources, Wellness, Students Governance, and Risk Office. In addition, the *Involvement of External Stakeholders*: To ensure accountability, institutions should involve external stakeholders, such as accreditation bodies and government agencies, in monitoring and enforcing ethical standards. This external oversight can provide an additional layer of accountability and support for internal efforts to address academic jealousy. External stakeholders like the alumni organisation, old alumni organisation, and provincial government should be involved. Immediate action on these recommendations is crucial for safeguarding the integrity and future success of South Africa's HE institutions.

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